

College V.S. Health

Problem

They say that college is a period of time for reaching maturity in the most ways possible. College is a time for young adults to discover who they are, learn better study habits, and prepare for success in their own future. Although, when most people travel back in time and look at their own college experience, it's not usually all the studying that comes to mind first. During this experiment, I wanted to know if college students thought of themselves as healthy. I also wanted to know if their hobbies, clubs or majors impacted their health. I conducted eight interviews which included four males and four females. I thought this would give me enough information to decide whether it was or was not possible to be healthy while in college. I also incorporated much of my own personal examples and experience into this experiment. Also, before my knowledge, I provided information from *College Student Journal (American Journal of Health Promotion 2014 Vol.28 No.5)*,

Background

"Early adoption of healthy lifestyles can help to ensure a healthy and productive adult population, nonetheless it is well documented that many college undergraduate students exhibit health behaviors that are well below public health recommendations." (Adrienne Wald, EdD). I wanted to know why this is and if college students are aware of the stress they are putting on their bodies. "For example, in the United States, only 30% to 50% of college undergraduates are physically active, and <25% eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Also, sleep behaviors in college undergraduates often are poor, and occasional sleep deprivation is a common problem." (Adrienne

Wald, EdD). In these studies, it was found that when students get the recommended amount of sleep, nutrition and exercise, their grade point average was higher than normal, just from practicing healthy lifestyle behaviors. When I conducted my own research, I asked the students about their grades and majors and what they mean to them and all eight students I interviewed said that grades are extremely important to them. College can be a very stressful environment; many deal with a lesser amount of money, less sleep, and less time. Often, demanding schedules and difficulties balancing various priorities leave students little time to shop, prepare meals, and engage in physical activity. Therefore, physical activity is sacrificed and healthier foods are replaced by cheaper, less nutritious and more convenient fast food options (Meltzer, Fontaine, Colbert, Creadore, & Cuoco, 2007).

It's very important to stay fit and healthy throughout your entire life; healthy people are happy people. But in college, many students are unaware of the benefits and advances of being engaged in a healthy lifestyle.

Method

I decided to go deeper into my process because I came up with the idea that where people go to college and how they were raised has a lot to do with their health. I have many friends that go to school in the south and it happens to be spring and summer there all year round. The schools are University of Tampa, Coastal Carolina University, and Arizona State University. I included these persons in the interview because I thought it'd be intelligent and more accurate to have opinions and views from people at other schools, not just Bloomsburg University. I studied two people who I know were avid gym go-ers people and asked a few of them of view simple interview questions. I asked all eight students the same questions. These included, "what is your major, do you eat breakfast and have a good nutrition, do you go to the gym, what are your weekends like (night life), how many hours of sleep a

night do you get and do you consider yourself a healthy college student?”. I am an exercise science major and have been involved with fitness and nutrition for about three years now so I know a lot about what it takes to be a healthy person. That is why I asked many of these questions.

Findings

Through my findings and to my surprise, I came across many different answers to all the questions I had to ask in the interviews. I found it ironic when people gave me a weird look when I asked them if they are healthy “for a college student”. I thought it was an odd question too; why not just ask if they’re healthy for a regular person? I specified college student because people in college live completely different lives than others with a steady job or in grade school. College students have a crazy schedule just about every day. Whether it’s waking up at 8:00 a.m. on a Tuesday, 12:00 p.m. on a Wednesday or having a 6:00-9:00 p.m. class on a Thursday, everyone’s schedule is different. After classes, you add in clubs, sports, greek life, and anything in between; it adds up to be a lot and sometimes too much. So how do you fit in the time to be healthy? What do you do to get rid of all the stress? Most college students drink. On average, one shot of vodka is 100 calories and everyone knows one is never enough. Binge drinking is part of the college experience but very dangerous and unhealthy to do. It’s very easy to drink up to 1,500 calories a night which is on average the amount of calories a girl in college consumes in a day from eating. All eight students I interviewed said they binge drink on the weekends, some even on the week days.

Asking someone if they think they’re healthy for a college student makes sense because you have to consider what the majority of college students do and what most of their experience is about. For example, when asked if they eat breakfast and what their eating habits are like, most of them said it depends on the day and they only have two meal swipes per day. It’s not at all like asking someone who has a routine schedule. Nutrition is extremely important to health, mentally and physically. Many

students claim they over eat when they're stressed and even eat very unhealthy foods. The students that said this didn't think they were healthy college students. I'd agree because I have a crazy schedule as well and still find time to eat colorful foods, the right portions and breakfast with only two meal swipes.

Stress comes into play again when asked how much sleep each person gets a night. The recommended amount of sleep a night is 8 hours but most students said it's just about impossible at certain times to get that much sleep. Although, I really believe in time management plays a huge role in college kids' lives.

Another question asked was if the students go to the gym. All the students that live in warmer states said they exercise 3-5 times a weeks; but the students that were asked at Bloomsburg University said different things. Only four of them claimed they go to the gym. Some students said that they have fast metabolisms so they don't feel the need to go to the gym and I think that that was just the way they were raised. I have a fast metabolism too but my parents have always enforced health and staying fit. I think that a big reason people who live in the south go to the gym more is because it's warmer so they wear less clothing and it is a lot easier to go to the gym when the sun is out rather than walking there in the snow or freezing rain. One of the pictures in the beginning was of the Bloomsburg Recreational Center. The rec center has an endless amount of activities to perform including the regular gym equipment. This would include cardio machines, weight machines, yoga rooms, and even classes for boxing or Zumba. They also have less strenuous activities like basketball courts, rock climbing, soccer, and tennis and racquet ball.

Finally, I am an exercise science major and I believe my major 100% influences my health. I'd be worried if it didn't because of how much information I obtain about health. When I asked other students if they think their major influences their health, only four out of the eight said it did. Their

majors included accounting, pre-medicine, exercise science and psychology. These majors all made sense for many reasons. They mostly explained that they are hard majors with a lot of science classes. Science classes give you a lot of work load and a big work load means a lot of stress. They said that all that stress makes them sleep deprived and gives them no time to work out. The psychology and exercise science major claimed their major influences them in a positive way. They said it makes them want to be healthier and work out more often because they are aware of all the benefits exercise causes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is possible to be healthy in college but it doesn't happen easily. I definitely believe it is possible to stay in shape and extremely important but the experiment was about if other students believe they were or were not healthy for college students. Out of the eight boys and girls asked, only three considered themselves to be healthy college kids. I think this has a lot to do with the way early adults tend to eat and the amount they spend drinking. Many complained about not having enough time to be healthy but from my researched the biggest thing I learned was that college is a time for extreme education, yet many students are unaware of health education and the easy things you can do to live a better lifestyle. College is exciting, new, fun, challenging but truly an incredible experience. It would just be better if everyone cared a little more. Lifestyle health-promoting behaviors enhance health and wellbeing in adults and there is increasing evidence of these associations in adolescents and young adults. Health-promoting behaviors are associated with improved academic performance and cognition in children, but these have not been well studied in college students (American Journal of Health Promotion). All in all, I think college students need to be more aware of their health and get more educated because it is just as important as their grades.

Works Cited

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